evaluation of the evidence and honest reflection about the limitations of our data.

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https://doi.org/10.15664/tis.v33i2.3274

Alistair J. Cuthbert, *Spiritual Warfare: A Charismatic Baptist Theology of Participating in Divine Conflict*, Foreword by Gregory A. Boyd (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications 2025), pp. xxviii + 213 pages, ISBN 979-8385230006. £24.99

Recalling the embarrassment that theological liberals felt in the 1960s, as traditionalists resolutely upheld the necessity of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus, as well as His virgin birth, Alistair Cuthbert's first monograph might cause the same kind of squeamishness. Not that this research on spiritual warfare is unjustifiable, but theological heavyweights such as Karl Barth and Walter Wink, coupled with biblical scholars such as N. T. Wright, following George Caird, have swayed discussion away from the ontology of evil as a credible field for many readers, so attempting to enter into such a theological enquiry is uncommon today. Cuthbert's contribution is therefore an important one, bravely bringing to the table a minority report, but a serious one which demands respect.

As this book correctly reminds us, the Christian Church today is most numerous, dynamic and buoyant in the Global South. It is in these Latin American, African and Asian countries where contemporary accounts of the Church bringing about deliverances, exorcisms, encounters with Satan and the demonic, continue to be described and accepted as real. To their advantage, Cuthbert is quick to note, these realities happen to be remarkably similar to the 'power encounters' we read of in the Gospels and Acts. Irrespective of the resistance to this in the hardwiring of post-Enlightenment rationalist thought in the West today, these reports demand a theology honest enough to come to terms with theological praxis in the world today. This is just such an account. The book's argument is divided into three parts: the first comprises two chapters on the theology of Paul S.

Fiddes; the second addresses the doctrine of God across three chapters; and the third is a single chapter on theological construction.

Locating himself in the British Baptist tradition, as well as disclosing his charismatic commitment to spirituality in concert (not that these two distinctives are uncomfortable partners *per se*), Cuthbert seeks a systematic way into exploring a doctrine of God capacious and nuanced enough to house within it a satisfying ontological account of evil. To do this he makes Fiddes, a seminal Baptist theologian in Britain, his chief interlocutor, rather than, appropriating David Wright (someone who has made important contributions to thinking in this subject from a Baptistic perspective), as his way into this topic. One potential weakness in this selection is that Fiddes primarily seeks to address theodicy using philosophy, rather than the covenantal language of Scripture, which means the argument the book makes is fundamentally philosophical. In making this selection the author is able to bridge from and work with Fiddes' elucidation of God's kenotic sovereignty, God's passibility, and God's panentheism, thus making Godself open to all creatures, in a way which grants a way of constructing an understanding of God's allowance of naked, demonic evil in the world without the claim that God is the author of said evil. Because Fiddes understands himself to be doing post-Auschwitz theology (no doubt feeling the influence of Tübingen's Eberhard Jüngel), this necessarily engenders a theodicy. Finding a way to theologically explain such a heinous point in European history means Fiddes must address evil.

The author's industriousness in amassing and comprehending Fiddes' corpus is an impressive feat in and of itself. And there is no hint of an uncritical acceptance of the Baptist master throughout this project. While Cuthbert sees that Fiddes' growing body of work is germane to how he might conceive the angelic and demonic, he also identifies much within Fiddes' theology proper which warrants (sometimes significant) repair. In this sense Cuthbert's interlocution with Fiddes is fair and even-handed.

Fiddes is vital to the project presented here, however, insofar as he challenges to the uttermost the traditional view of God's impassibility. This is important to Cuthbert for accounts of God which promote God's impassibility, alongside traditional notions of God's almighty power, immutability, relationship to time and space, and foreknowledge, have shown themselves to be wanting in providing satisfying treatments of Satan and the demonic. When accounts of spiritual warfare go unexplained or at odds with any theology proper, any doctrine of God, such work does

little to commend itself to those searching for an account of the demonic which does not leave us with grave perplexations about God. Therefore, in turning to Fiddes, Cuthbert finds not only someone in his ecclesial tradition to work with, but someone whose doctrine of God undercuts and bypasses older problems in not having to subscribe to the same commitments which those loyal to Augustine of Hippo, for example, feel they must stay faithful to.

The core argument of this book is to take up and assess Fiddes' reformulation of the classical attributes of God: omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. For those who are unfamiliar with Fiddes' theological work, his Baptistic interpretation of each of these divine attributes follows a clear theologic, while nevertheless surprising the reader steeped in classical Christian theology. In Chapter 3, Omniscience is rendered in a way that rejects exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Instead, Fiddes finds greater resources in taking up philosophical positions on libertarian free will to describe the extent of God's knowledge. The chapter might have been further buttressed with the inclusion of deeper analyses of von Balthasar's critique of Moltmann's adherence to Whitehead, and his own sympathy with of Tanner's Christological view of God's sovereignty. Omnipotence is redefined Christologically through His kenosis, redirecting naked power through suffering love at the crucifixion and opening up Godself to true vulnerability.

The core strength of Cuthbert's argument, however, is found in Chapter 5 on Panentheism, where God's omnipresence is considered. Cuthbert claims, 'Fiddes' panentheistic vision of participating in God is the overarching framework of his doctrine of God' (p. 71). Crucial to the overall purpose of the book, this chapter attempts to find a way to conceive of the primary cause of evil without pinning the blame on God. And if evil does reside within Godself (assuming all creation is within God), in what exactly is it to be found? Cuthbert weaves Fiddes' redevelopment of a dialectical approach to Barth's *das Nichtige* (nothingness) in his own fashion, where he identifies room for diabolic powers to cause chaos within Godself. Cuthbert is critical of Fiddes' loyal adoption of Augustine's *privatio boni*. But he finds in von Balthasar's trinitarianism at the cross the space for rebellious spirits and humans to rebel against God because of the estranged relations between the Father and Son. The shaking of one's created fist in God's face creates 'a twisted knot' in the context of the Son's sacrifice before the Father. The Father's silence and distance from His Son

in this salvific moment allows sufficient room to explicate demonic/satanic activity within Godself and His world. He argues,

> if the Spirit of Christ is present and moves in the relations between the Son and the Father, relations in which exist the measureless distance of sin and the incomprehensible separation within God himself that houses darkness, malevolence, hell, and the twisted knot of creation's rebellion against its origins, then it seems consistent to argue that within the yes of the Son to the Father, the Spirit of Christ is continually and actively dispersing evil. (pp. 127–28)

Ultimately Cuthbert works hard to provide a convincing account of panentheism, capacious enough to account for the numerous biblical references to satanic and demonic mania within creation. By the close of this clinching chapter, Cuthbert's adoption of Fiddes as his integral interlocutor becomes all the clearer as he offers the author the apparatus he needs to find a theological solution worthy of his original problem.

Fiddes is renowned for his interdisciplinary approach to theological enquiry. Emulating this, Cuthbert is comfortable switching between systematic theology, philosophical theology and biblical exegesis, while assessing practical theological approaches to power encounters with the demonic realm. I commend this book as an important contribution to Baptistic theology in the British tradition. It provides a robust apparatus to think more cogently about the spiritual realm, where an understanding of the triune God and rebellious ontological evil can coexist.

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https://doi.org/10.15664/tis.v33i2.3275